

## **Minutes of the Natural Heritage Advisory Council**

January 27, 2011

### **Teleconference**

Natural Resources Building  
1111 Washington Street Se  
Olympia, Washington  
Room 432  
10:30A.M. – 12:30 A.M.

Voting members present (on phone): Al Black, Bob Meier, Janelle Downs, Peter Dunwiddie, Cherie Kearney, George Rohrbacher, John Banks, Peter Dunwiddie.

Ex Officio members: Jeanne Koenings (Department of Ecology), Elizabeth Rodrick (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife), Jim Eychaner (Recreation and Conservation Office) and Rob Fimbel (phone) (State Parks and Recreation Commission)

Members absent: Len Barson, Wade Troutman, Jed Herman (Washington Department of Natural Resources)

DNR Staff: John Gamon, Curt Pavola, Pene Speaks, Heather Kapust, Dave Wilderman, Keyna Bugner (phone), Tony Sachet (phone), Deborah Nemens, Paul McFarland (phone)

### **I. Introductions**

Chair Black called the meeting to order. All present introduced themselves or identified themselves as they joined the conference call.

### **II. Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Minutes from the October 20, 2010 meeting were distributed prior to the meeting.

*Chair Black asked if there were any corrections to be made to the October Minutes; none were indicated. A motion to approve the Minutes of the October 20, 2010 meeting of the Natural Heritage Advisory Council as presented was made by Janelle Downs, seconded by Bob Meier. The motion passed unanimously. (Voting was accomplished by members on the teleconference stating their names for “aye” votes.)*

### **III. Old Business**

#### **Progress on Past Recommendations: Acquisitions Report**

Kapust presented the council with an acquisitions update (see Power Point presentation):

- Chehalis River Surge Plain NAP – DNR acquired three parcels from owners Anderson, Anderson & Middleton and Port Blakely, which added 375 acres to the site.
- Stavis NRCA – DNR acquired three parcels from owners Cantu, Cunningham, and Barrett, which added about 42 acres to the site.
- Elk River NRCA – DNR acquired two parcels from Wiksten and Green Diamond, which added 221 acres to the site.
- Ink Blot NAP – DNR acquired a key parcel, which was the first acquisition at the site and, thereby, established the NAP with 153 acres. This site was originally approved for NAP designation by the NHAC in 1987.

#### **IV. New Business**

##### **Natural Heritage Plan Update - Draft Review**

Gamon presented a version of the draft Natural Heritage Plan Update that had been sent to council members on January 25, 2011 that was slightly revised from the draft sent with the Council meeting packet materials. Bob Meier and Len Barson had provided comments regarding the draft prior to today's meeting. The council discussed the content in the draft document and gave the staff feedback regarding the rationale for changes in species and ecosystem priorities, format of the priorities table, emphasizing partnerships, avoiding jargon, Natural Area/Natural Heritage ties, natural area restoration and educational uses, looking toward future program activities, and adding information to the list of NHAC names in the document.

In preparation for a motion regarding approval of the NH Plan Update, Gamon reviewed the changes suggested by council members that staff will incorporate (to the degree possible considering format and space) for the final document:

- Reorder the table of changes and addition to the list of NH priority species and ecosystems;
- add information about the amount external funding raised by the NH program;
- note why the changes in priority were made to ecosystem types;
- make additions to the first page about the role of NA program;
- enhance the language about the importance of restoration on natural areas and then exporting that learning to others (laboratories) including adding language about the "service learning" role of NA's;
- add a reference to the program's work beyond 2013;
- add member "type" to council member names;
- review the headings in the document considering communication of key messages about the work of the programs.

*The motion was made by George Rohrbacher to approve the Natural Heritage Plan Update with suggested changes; Bob Meier second. The motion passed unanimously. (Voting was accomplished by members on the teleconference stating their names for "aye" votes.)*

##### **Trout Lake NAP – Hunting access report**

Wilderman reviewed the briefing paper, sent to the council prior to today's meeting, regarding the hunting agreement at Trout Lake Natural Area Preserve. [See Trout Lake NHAC Briefing Hunting (Jan2011)] He reminded the members of the council decision from 2006 by which they approved Natural Area staff working with the Department of Fish and Wildlife and neighbors to the NAP to develop an agreement to allow restricted hunting within the natural area [See NHAC-Briefing-TL-Hunting (March2006)]. There has been a "firearm restricted area," including the natural area, in place since that time that allows archery and shotgun only, over a shortened hunting season. Natural Areas Program staff have been monitoring the site for potential impacts from hunter access including establishing photo points at key access spots.

Natural Areas staff have reviewed the data from the past four years of monitoring and concluded that the impacts from hunters accessing the site are minimal to non-existent. Discussions with neighbors have been positive about the current management approach. WDFW has made no indication that they want to discontinue the firearm restriction area and feedback from the local WDFW biologist has been supportive of maintaining it. The Natural Areas Program is seeking guidance from the council about continued management of the site and presented the following options for consideration:

- 1) Withdraw from firearm restricted area and post the entire site with one or combination of the following signs: no firearm discharge, no access beyond this point, no trespassing.
  - a. Due to limited enforcement staff, enforcement of these provisions has not been feasible in the past and is likely to continue to be so.
  - b. Non-participation in the firearm restricted area would likely result in increased pressure on the NAP by those forced out of the rest of the restricted area.
- 2) Attempt to resolve the safety issue through other means, e.g. county “safety zone/no shooting zone.”
  - a. This was attempted in the past without success.
- 3) Continue to participate in the firearm restriction area as it currently exists.
  - a. Continue periodic monitoring and assessment to ensure no impacts to the site.
  - b. WDFW provides enforcement under this scenario.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Continue to participate in the firearm restriction area, with periodic monitoring of use levels and potential site impacts.

Council members discussed the options and issues regarding the purpose of the agreement with WDFW; the effectiveness of the agreement to control hunter access through better enforcement; allowing some limited hunting to help keep elk numbers at a lower level, heading off potential vegetation damage issues; and the status of the Oregon spotted frog population at the site (rebounding from a steep decline, with two new reproduction sites identified).

*A motion was made by Cherie Kearney to support recommendation 3: Continue to participate in the firearm restriction area as it currently exists. The motion was seconded by George Rohrbacher; the motion passed unanimously. (Voting was accomplished by members on the teleconference stating their names for “aye” votes.)*

## **Governor’s budget proposal**

### **NH Program**

Speaks presented information regarding the Governor’s initial draft budget and a proposal that would combine the Department of Fish and Wildlife, State Parks and Recreation Commission and the Recreation and Conservation Office into a single agency known as the Conservation and Recreation Department. The proposal would include moving the Natural Heritage Program (not the Natural Areas Program) to the newly formed agency along with DNR’s enforcement officers. There is mixed reception from stakeholders about the proposed reorganization. Executive management has indicated that DNR is opposed to moving the NH program. Speaks indicated she would keep the council informed of any changes or developments regarding the Governor’s proposal.

### **Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program grants**

The Governor’s draft budget also includes major changes to the distribution of WWRP grants. The funding level was proposed at \$20 million with only those projects benefitting Puget Sound being funded. Projects that would be funded would be for development or restoration with no state agency acquisitions projects receiving any money. Some private organization acquisitions would still receive money under the budget proposal. Speaks reminded the council that this was an initial budget and that the legislature’s budget proposal could be much different.

## **V. Agency Reports**

### **Recreation and Conservation Office - no report**

**Department of Ecology – no report**  
**State Parks and Recreation Commission – no report**

**Department of Fish and Wildlife**

Rodrick reported that the Conservation Registry website is up and running. The site is a project of Defenders of Wildlife and is intended to be a source for information about conservation projects across the state. The site includes information from the Recreation and Conservation Office's database and the USFWS Endangered Species Recovery (Section 6) Grant Program. The link to the site is <http://wa.conservationregistry.org/>. She also mentioned the Section 6 grant projects for Washington had been submitted for national evaluation. There were seven projects from across the state with about \$27 million in grant funding requested. (A list of the projects including a description of each was sent to the council after the meeting.) Rodrick also told the council about an innovative workshop sponsored by the Washington Forest Protection Association titled: Conservation Lands and Exceptional Environmental Resources Exchange. The workshop is intended to bring large forest land owners together with potential conservation land buyers, such as state and local agencies and private conservation organizations. The workshop is by invitation only.

**Department of Natural Resources**

Speaks mentioned that the department is busy with legislative issues including some agency request legislation. One legislative proposal would establish a new land management designation, Community Forest Trust (CFT). The proposal includes a mechanism to transfer DNR-managed trust lands into CFT status similar to Trust Land Transfer. The land would continue to be owned by DNR but would be managed under a management plan developed by the local community and the department. This would likely include management for recreational uses and a reduced timber harvest. Any revenue produced from the land would go to support the management of those particular parcels. The department is also proposing, along with Departments of Ecology and Fish and Wildlife and State Parks, to create a Puget Sound Conservation Corps similar to the existing Washington Conservation Corps but focused on Puget Sound restoration and stewardship projects.

**VI. Natural Areas Program Report: See written report (sent to council after the meeting)**

Pavola mentioned that there have been NA staffing changes in Northwest Region. Other highlights will be in the written report.

**VII. Natural Heritage Program Report: See written report (sent to council members after the meeting)**

Gamon told the council that the funding from external sources for the NH program is now sufficient to support the staff through the end of this biennium but that it represents a much higher proportion of the program's budget than in the past. He also mentioned the soon-to-be available *Field Guide to the Rare Plants of Washington* and showed a sample page from the publication. The book is listed in the UW Press Catalog for spring and was funded through grants and donations. We will send purchase options to the council when it's available.

**VII. Other Business - none**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:45 PST.